

“Northwest U.S. 290 QuickRide” – U.S. 290, Houston, TX, HOV to HOT Conversion Project

Project Goals

The U.S. 290 “Northwest Freeway” HOV lane was initially built to reduce congestion in the corridor by providing an incentive for people to carpool, but the minimum HOV2 requirement was changed to minimum HOV3 in 1988 due to high levels of congestion on the facility. After HOV2 was eliminated, the raised occupancy restrictions resulted in the HOV lane being underutilized during peak hours. In November 2000, Houston’s QuickRide program was introduced on this facility to allow HOV2 vehicles access without overwhelming the system. METRO hopes to use the new HOT lane program to maximize lane use and preserve an approximate speed of 50 mph on the facility, which would improve METRO bus service on-time performance.

Project Length

13.5 miles

Number of HOT lanes

1 reversible lane

Midpoint Access

No at-grade midpoint access; all access is via dedicated direct connectors designed for transit

Lane Separation

Concrete barrier separation

Daily Traffic

Under QuickRide there are approximately 7,700 “free” vehicles in the HOT lane and 75 paying vehicles, but these numbers can vary greatly from day to day; when conversion to a managed lane is complete, the goal will be a level of service of about 1,500 vehicles per hour

Capital Costs

\$50,000 (2005)

Operating Costs

\$140,000 annually

Revenue

\$155,000 annually

Project Contact

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Project Description

The “Northwest Freeway” QuickRide facility on U.S. 290 in Houston is an expansion of the program that was begun on Houston’s Katy Freeway (I-10) facility in 1998. The QuickRide program requires the use of a transponder to participate in the program. With the conversion to dynamically-priced HOT lanes, QuickRide will be replaced by an EZtag (or METRO equivalent).

Pricing Parameters

- SOVs prohibited at all times under QuickRide, but will be permitted under the new HOT lane system unless the lane becomes congested.
- Toll currently free for:
 - Registered 3+ carpools
 - Buses
 - Emergency vehicles
 - Motorcycles
- QuickRide toll rate - \$2.00 for HOV2 during peak hours
- QuickRide operates Mon – Fri during morning peak hours (6:45 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.).

Unique Features

- One reversible lane in median with barrier separation
- Close integration with METRO’s Park & Ride and Express bus services

Project Support

For both QuickRide users and non-QuickRide participants, the most important benefit for using the HOV lane is to save travel time. The perception of several focus group participants was that HOV lane use saved as much as 50 percent of total commute travel time. Another important benefit to users of the HOV lane is safety. Reliability was not as highly rated as travel-time savings and safety.

Project Website

http://www.ridemetro.org/TransportationServices/HOV_locations/HOV_system.asp

